

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
2368-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we request that you include at least \$40 million in funding for the Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program (“Basic Needs Grants”) within the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education.

Basic Needs Grants leverage Federal, State, local, and institutional resources to improve access to the nutritious food, stable housing, affordable child care, physical and mental health services, technology, and transportation that students need to be successful. Basic Needs Grants were first funded in FY21, and we are grateful for the increases the program received in FY22 and FY23. In FY22, 110 applications received were eligible for review; however, only 14 applicants were funded due to budgetary constraints. With the increase in funding from FY21 to FY22, 142,000 students – an increase of 50,000 from the previous fiscal year – have been served by the Basic Needs Grants. The Department of Education announced Basic Needs Grants for FY22 recipients to colleges and universities in both rural and urban areas in states and territories such as Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Kansas, North Carolina, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Puerto Rico, Texas, and Tennessee. With continued support for the Basic Needs Program, students will have more access to the resources they need to succeed, no matter where they live or study.

Research from The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice shows that nearly three in five students in higher education do not have enough to eat or a stable place to live. Rates of basic needs insecurity are much higher for historically marginalized students, including students of color, parenting students, LGBTQIA+ students, first-generation students, Pell Grant recipients, former foster youth, and justice-involved students. Students at community colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities also experience higher levels of basic needs insecurity.

Reflecting the substantial demand and the range of areas institutions can use these funds for, we ask the Committee to increase support for this program to \$40 million and that the awards shall continue to be prioritized for at least 25% of grants going to community colleges and at least 25% of grants going to four-year Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and other Minority-Serving Institutions. Increased funding will allow more colleges and universities across the country to fund comprehensive support for students, while building a set of models and promising practices that can be replicated by other institutions across the nation.

In addition to expanded funding, we encourage you to include report language that focuses the program on systemic approaches informed by behavioral science and human-centered design to address basic needs insecurity. The evidence is clear that addressing student basic needs through a multi-pronged approach can benefit students and reduce administrative burdens. That is why we were also pleased to see the President’s proposed budget include a new *Systemwide Holistic Student Supports* program as a complement to the Basic

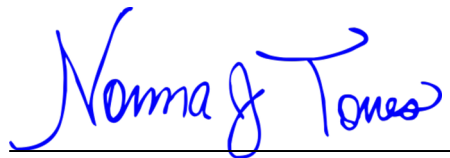
Needs Grant program. This new proposed grant would increase cross-agency support to simplify and expand systemwide coordination between federal and local benefits beyond financial aid to help meet the basic needs of students.

With that said, colleges and universities should also regularly survey and evaluate the needs of their students to support evidence-based decision-making, leverage other Federal, state, local, and institutional resources (such as public benefit programs and tax benefits) for solutions, and centralize supports through basic needs centers or hubs that offer services such as emergency aid, public benefits access, case management, food pantries, and other services.

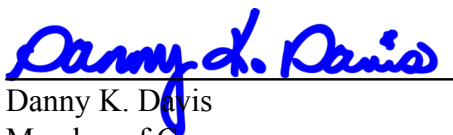
Basic Needs Grants prevent students from sacrificing their health and well-being to succeed in higher education. Addressing the crisis of student basic needs insecurity is essential for helping students access and afford higher education.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

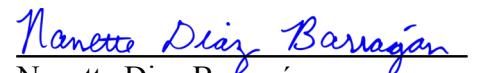
Sincerely,



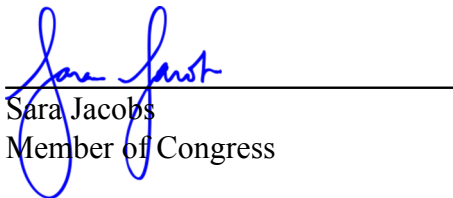
Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



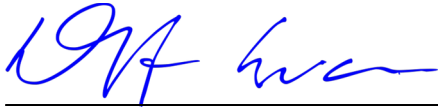
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



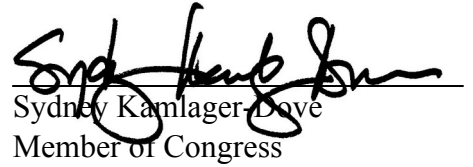
Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



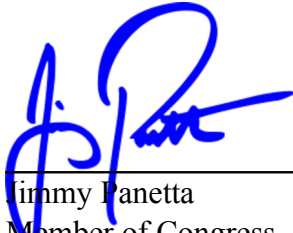
Mike Levin
Member of Congress



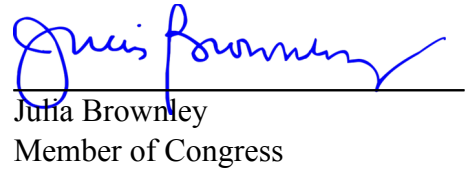
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



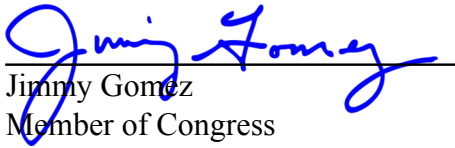
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Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



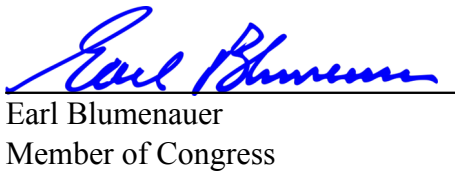
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



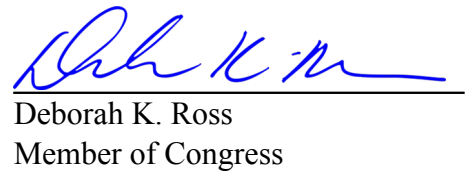
Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



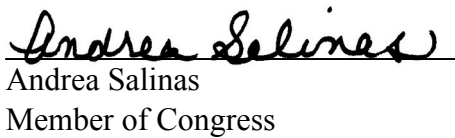
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Earl Blumenauer
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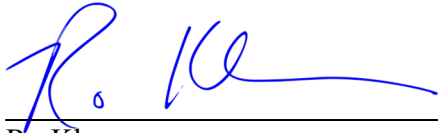
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Katie Porter
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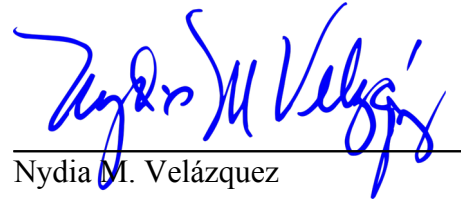
Ro Khanna
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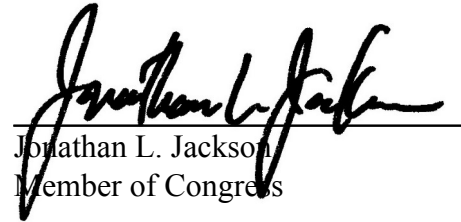
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